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Turner begins CIA housecleaning

WASHINGTON [UPI]—CIA Director Stansfield Turner has forced his No. 1 deputy to retire and has demanded the retirement of the top command of the agency's clandestine operations department, sources said Wednesday.

The sources said Turner had requested the early retirement of E. Henry Knoche, 52, his deputy director decorated by President Carter in January for distinguished civilian service.

Turner released a statement that said:

"The director of central intelligence confirms that the deputy director of central intelligence, E. Henry Knoche, submitted his resignation to the President on July 5, effective on Aug. 11, 1977. The President has not yet nominated a successor. There are no plans for forced retirements or removals of any top CIA officials. There are no plans for major changes in the CIA organization at this time."

The sources said Knoche sent his letter to the White House, a necessary formality because he was appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

WHITE HOUSE Press Secretary Jody Powell said Turner "has discussed his plans with the President, [but] not with regard to every specific change." Powell said he did not know whether Carter had received Knoche's letter.

A request for early retirement is the CIA euphemism for a demand for resignation.

The sources said Turner also asked for the early retirement of at least 20 men running the CIA's department responsible for covert operations, "dirty tricks," and undercover gathering of intelligence, including the director and his deputy. One source called it a "wholesale purge."

"This comprises about the whole headquarters command of that section, which is not large," the source said. "Almost all are senior officers."

KNOCHE, A FORMER navy veteran of World War II and Korea, joined the CIA in 1953 and was confirmed as deputy to CIA Director George Bush on June 30, 1976. Bush, an appointee of President

Gerald Ford, resigned after Carter was elected.

Before Turner took over in February, Knoche ran the CIA as acting director.

The sources said John Mahon, now in the CIA's administrative section and a former member of the clandestine directorate, has been selected by Turner to replace Knoche.

The exact reasons for Knoche's forced early retirement were not clear, but a pattern was evident in the intended sweep by Turner of the Clandestine Operations Directorate.

HE REQUESTED the early retirement of William Wells and Theodore Shackley, the two top men in the Deputy Directorate of Operations—the CIA branch handling clandestine operations. Both are agency veterans and one unconfirmed report said they are resisting the pressure to retire.